

AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION MEETING

March 9, 2010

First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall

Minutes

Members Present: Wm Levine, Pat Wagner, Jaime Tidlund, John Thibbits, Ruth Hazzard, Sally Fitz, Touria Eaton, Richard Roznoy (non-voting Planning Board rep)

Non-Members Present: David Ziomek (Staff Liaison)

Minutes: The February 9th and February 23rd minutes were reviewed and unanimously approved with changes made.

Members/Chair:

Ruth has decided to step down as the chair of the Agricultural Commission, she feels maybe June would be her last meeting as chair, she is still uncertain if she will remain a member of the Commission. Touria and Jaime both expressed interest in remaining on the commission as their terms are up in June 30th. Discussion continued about possible new members, Pat mentioned Al Wentworth; she said she would speak with him.

Water Rates:

Pat came to the commission with some information about how the water and sewer gets charged and the Agricultural Commission brainstormed ideas to bring to the town to find a way to help farmers so they do not get charge for sewer when they are not using it.

A motion was brought to the table as follows: The Agricultural Commission endorses a plan to meet with Town staff to develop or revive a Town policy for an agricultural rate for sewage charges on town water on farms in Amherst.

This motion was unanimously approved.

Farmer Contact list:

The list was reviewed again and more names were added; Ruth also wants to note whether the people listed are farmers or non farmers (advocates)

Breakfast Plans:

Pat suggested having a speaker at some of the upcoming meetings to cover specific topics. Ruth would like to see the breakfast be a way to unite farmers and bridge gaps and build connections to help make this group of people stronger. The minutes of the last breakfast were reviewed again the commission discussed possible topics from this list to discuss at future meetings. We need to get a sense of what Amherst farmers really want and need, we have ideas but really need to hear it directly.

The next breakfast will be at Kelly's Thursday 3/25/2010 at 9:30 a.m. (With a back up date of the 23rd)

Sally, Touria and Pat are going to draft some questions to raise at the meeting regarding sales and marketing and how to build your farm business. We would like to try to get the invitation out by the 14th with some questions on the invitation.

Preliminary Overview of Town Owned Land:

David did a presentation showing the Agricultural Commission how land is classified in town and out of town. He said the open space and recreation plan is used as a guiding document about approaching land in Amherst and how it is classified. Currently the town has 2000 acres in APR and 3000 in Watershed and 2000 with conservation restrictions. The Town's Conservation Commission has complete care and control over all the Town conservation land; they set all of the rules and regulations for these parcels. David indicated that he would like to see a management plan developed for every conservation parcel, or have compartments that would contain smaller parcels lumped together.

Pat feels that we need some sort of solid listing of all parcels and the funding sources, because having the funding sources would let the Agricultural Commission know just how these pieces could actually be used.

David says there is about 80 acres of town owned land that would be available for agricultural use, 5-7 acres of this is community gardens and about 40 acres of this is for equestrian use on Station Road. He thought the majority of the remaining balance of the acres is hay land.

The Agricultural Commission feels that there needs to be a better relationship between our commission and the Conservation Commission so that we can be involved with some of their discussion regarding possible agricultural lands.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jaime Tidlund